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ABSTRACT

Community colleges are under pressure from internal and external forces to recruit and retain minority faculty members. According to recent studies, approximately 90% of the total faculty at two- and four-year public and private colleges are white. The highest percentage of faculty of color are employed at public four-year institutions (12.6%) and the lowest percentage at private two-year colleges (2.6%). Various strategies have been suggested for recruiting minority faculty, including the following: (1) keep an open mind about credentials and recognize the value of non-academic experiences; (2) include area minority professionals on search committees; (3) utilize minority media in recruitment campaigns; (4) recruit through business and industry partnerships; (5) include minorities on interview committees; (6) keep candidate pools open until minority applicants are found; (7) maintain dialogue and faculty exchanges with historically black colleges; (8) implement long-range programs that encourage minority and women students; and (10) diversify the entire campus. Retention strategies have also been proposed to retain minorities, including begin with a thorough orientation; promote collegiality; schedule diversity training and staff development programs; and incorporate minority faculty into decision-making and all facets of campus life. Examples of successful minority recruitment and retention programs are in place at Maricopa and California Community Colleges. (KP)

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Digest

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Creating and Maintaining a Diverse Faculty

by Anita Colby & Elizabeth Foote

Today's community colleges are under pressure from internal and external forces to recruit and retain minority faculty members. Some commentators have alleged that minority students, especially those attending colleges where they make up a significant part of the student body, are alienated by facing an all-white faculty. The demand for minority faculty, particularly in the sciences and technical fields, is great throughout higher education, making it difficult for some community colleges to retain faculty even after they have been recruited. National studies indicate that fewer minorities are choosing education as a career path during their undergraduate years, indicating that the pool of minority candidates may remain small for some time (Robertson and Frier, 1994).

This digest focuses on the status of minority faculty in community colleges, and strategies that have been used successfully to recruit and retain them.

Status of Minority Faculty

According to recent studies (Carter, 1994), approximately 90% of the total faculty at the nation's two- and four-year, public and private colleges are white. The highest percentage of faculty of color are employed at public four-year institutions (12.6%), a figure influenced by the inclusion of historically black colleges. The lowest percentage are employed at private two-year colleges (2.6%). In studies conducted between 1988 and 1992, 3-5.1% of the faculty at two-year colleges were African American, 1-1.4% were American Indian, 2-2.2% were Asian American, 1.7% were Mexican American, 0.2-0.3% were Puerto Rican American. In comparison with all two-year college faculty, faculty of color are somewhat less likely to have a master's degree, more likely to have tenure, and very close to the national median for salary.

Opp and Smith's (1994) study of the recruitment and retention of minority faculty highlighted a number of institutional factors that served as predictors of whether a college had a high percentage of under-represented minorities on the faculty. Predictors influencing both recruitment and retention included having an African American, Mexican American or American Indian vice-president of academic affairs; the amount of contact that vice-presidents of academic affairs had with minority students and faculty; and having minorities serving on college boards of trustees.

Strategies for Recruiting Faculty of Color

Owens, Reis, and Hall (1994) suggest a variety of ways in which community colleges can be more effective in their efforts to recruit minority faculty. Their recommendations include the following:

- Keeping an open mind in evaluating the credentials of minority candidates, and recognizing the value of non-academic experiences.
- Including minority professionals from the service area on search committees.
- Utilizing minority media in recruitment campaigns, especially when language is an important factor.
- Making use of partnerships with business and industry to seek out potential candidates.

Owens, Reis, and Hall indicate that the first step in recruiting minority faculty is ensuring a commitment to institutional diversity from the highest levels of college administration.

Nicholas and Oliver (1994) add to this list the following strategies:

- Initiating programs that aggressively seek well-qualified minority candidates and women through wide varieties of networks and personal contacts.
- Including minority members on interview committees.
- Keeping candidate pools open until minority and female candidates with appropriate credentials are found.
- Maintaining on-going dialogues and possibly faculty exchanges with historically black colleges.
- Implementing long-range programs that encourage minority and women students from elementary school through graduate programs.
- Diversifying administration, staff, and student bodies as well as faculties.

Strategies for Retaining Faculty of Color

Given the effort involved in recruiting minority faculty, it is essential to devote resources to their retention. Owens, Reis, and Hall (1994) list the following tactics:

- Begin with a thorough orientation and provide assistance with college and campus resources, housing, shopping, and community services.
- To promote collegiality, schedule activities that require all faculty to interact such as diversity training and staff development programs.
- Incorporate minority faculty into the decision making process of the college, mainstream the teaching assignments, and include them in all facets of campus life and activities.

However, Robertson and Frier (1994) remind colleges not to make them the "minority representative" on every committee.

Successful Programs

The Maricopa Community Colleges utilized many of these strategies in their efforts to create applicant pools in which minorities and women are well represented (de los Santos, 1994). They visited and did direct mailings to colleges with large minority populations, mailed packets to individual minority graduate students, and sent faculty representatives to state and district minority organizations. These efforts resulted in an increase in full-time minority faculty, from 127 professors in 1987 (16.2 percent of the total) to 176 professors in 1992 (19.2 percent). They have also increased the number of minority managers (deans, directors, and coordinators) from 66 in 1987 (19.6 percent) to 91 in 1992 (23.2 percent).

California Community Colleges are also committed to affirmative action (Knoell, 1994). The key components of their plan are leadership from the top, rewards and incentives to districts and individuals who contribute to diverse staffing, required filing of affirmative action plans, an annual Affirmative Action Job Fair, and accountability to the state legislature. In 1992-93, they exceeded their goal of hiring 30 percent of their faculty from underrepresented ethnic and racial groups by 1.2 percent. They continue to work towards their long-term goal of a systemwide full-time workforce that reflects the demographic composition of the state by the year 2005.

Conclusion

Community colleges are changing in the constituencies they serve. A diverse faculty provides an effective and visible support system for the increasingly diverse student population. Minority faculty act as role models, advisors, and advocates for minority students while they expose majority students to new ideas. They are essential to a multicultural campus.

References

This digest was drawn from Creating and Maintaining a Diverse Faculty, New Directions for Community Colleges, Number 87, edited by William B. Harvey and James Valadez; published in September, 1994. The cited articles include: "The Status of Faculty in Community Colleges: What Do We Know," by Deborah J. Carter; "Minority Faculty Recruitment and Retention Strategies: The Maricopa Experience," by Alfredo G. de los Santos; "California Community College Faculty from Historically Underrepresented Racial and Ethnic Groups," by Dorothy M. Knoell; "Achieving Diversity Among Community College Faculty," by Freddie W. Nicholas, Sr. and Arnold R. Oliver; "Effective Strategies for Enhancing Minority Faculty Recruitment and Retention," by Ronald D. Opp and Albert Smith; "Bridging the Gap: Recruitment and Retention of Minority Faculty Members," by Jerry Sue Owens, Frank W. Reis, and Kathryn M. Hall; "Recruitment and Retention of Minority Faculty," by Piedad F. Robertson and Ted Frier.

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